

Process Improvement

Processes are always capable of improvement. Observing the actual implementation of a process or an overall methodology¹ will identify actions and outcomes within the following matrix. The actions are either authorised within the process or methodology or unauthorised (ie, not defined or specifically excluded). The results of the action are either productive and enhance the objectives of the organisation or unproductive and either consume resources for no real benefit or actively work against the organisations objectives.

Unauthorised unproductive activities need to be stopped and *authorised productive* processes supported and enhanced.

Authorised	Modify the Processes	Support the Processes
Unauthorised	Stop the Action Immediately	Opportunities for Improvements
	Unproductive	Productive

The two zones offering opportunities for significant process improvement are refining or removing elements of the methodology that do not add value to the overall management of the project and incorporating unauthorised processes that are not in the methodology but that are being used add value.

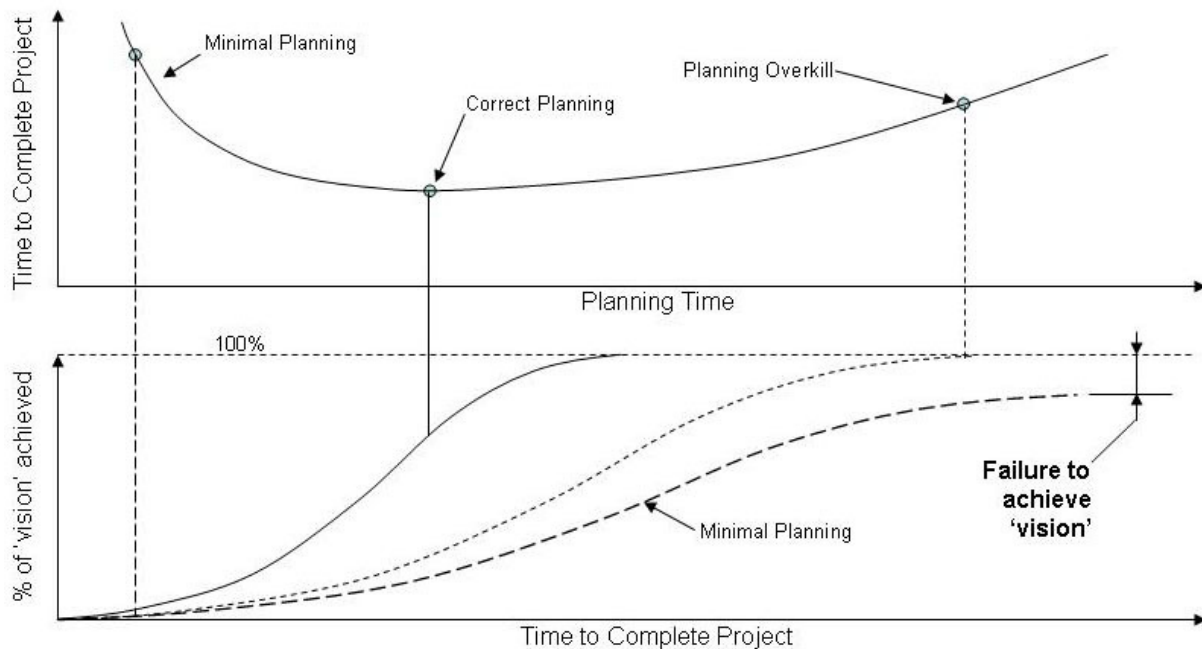
The easiest and most important area for action is rectifying the unproductive processes already in the methodology. Care need to be taken to ensure the definition of ‘unproductive’ is understood. Most planning processes don’t produce anything directly and consume effort; superficially they can be classified as ‘unproductive’.

In reality, effective planning contributes significantly to the efficient delivery of the overall ‘vision’ for the project and the value derived from planning is in assisting the efficient execution of the work based on an effective plan. However, excessively detailed planning can quickly become counterproductive (see: Firdman below).

Value judgements are needed to assess the point at which adding more detail or rigour to the planning process becomes ‘planning overkill’ reducing the overall value of the process and conversely, how much

¹ For more on selecting and implementing a methodology see WP1045:
http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1045_Methodologies.pdf

detail can be safely removed from a planning processes to improve overall productivity before insufficient planning starts to cause problems.



Adapted from Firdman, H. E. (1991). Strategic information systems: Forging the business and technology alliance. McGraw-Hill, New York.

Once the existing methodology is optimised and firmly in the ‘authorised and productive’ segment, the next area to examine is the unauthorised actions and processes that aid productivity and progressively incorporate these into your methodology. The ‘unauthorised and productive’ quadrant is where you find genuine innovation and opportunities for organisational gain.

Continuous Improvement

The first rounds of improvement are based on developing the maturity of the methodology or individual process based on the action matrix above. The second phase of improvement is to continually question the value of each step and process to minimise the amount of effort directed to running the methodology or whilst maximising its effectiveness.

Summary

OPM3 has demonstrated standardised processes that incorporate best practices can provide significant benefits to an organisation². The challenge is balancing systemised processes with the need for adequate flexibility to deal with the circumstances of each unique project, to best meet the needs of your organisation.

² See more on OPM3 at: <http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/OPM3.html>